

ASSESSMENT LITERACY OF MADRASAH TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the assessment literacy of the Madrasah teachers and their experiences in classroom assessment. The study employed a descriptive research design. The respondents of this study were the selected Madrasah teachers in the areas of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, who participated in the Empowering Madrasah Educators Seminar. The study used purposive sampling and descriptive statistics. Questionnaires on knowledge, skills, attitude and level of assessment literacy, with indicators covering the standards under the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, were administered to the Madrasah teachers. Interviews were also conducted among the selected participants. One major finding of the study was that the level of assessment literacy of Madrasah teachers needs attention, which implied that most of the Madrasah teachers need more knowledge and skills in using effective assessment tools. Through effective classroom assessment tools and strategies, better learning can be achieved.

KEYWORDS: Assessment Literacy, Madrasah Teachers, Learning Outcome & Revisiting Assessment Practices

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I. INTRODUCTION

The government's goal of access to quality education in the country expanded in terms of its scope. One of the areas that the Department of Education is giving attention to is education which provides Muslim learners with appropriate and relevant educational opportunities while placing into account their culture. The Madrasah Education seeks to integrate knowledge and skills which are relevant and give value to the Muslim identity (DepEd Order No. 41, s. 2017). The main subjects of Muslim education—the Qur'an (the holy book), Hadith (sayings of the prophet Mohammed), and Fiqh (jurisprudence)—are the focus of the curriculum.

Presidential Decree (PD) 1083, or the Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines, which provides that “the State shall consider the customs, traditions, beliefs and interests of national cultural communities in the formulation and implementation of state policies,” and Republic Act 6734, An Act Providing for an Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which provides “the need to establish, maintain and support a complete and integrated system of quality education and adopt an educational framework that is meaningful, relevant and responsive to the needs, ideals and aspirations of the people in the region,” support Madrasah education. The program aims to provide Muslim learners with appropriate and relevant educational opportunities while recognizing their cultural contexts and unique purposes for participating in the program offerings. It also aims to integrate content and competencies which are relevant and of interest to Muslim learners.

In line with the implementation of the *Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013* (Republic Act No. 10533), the Department of Education is adopting the Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Program from Grades 1 to 6. As stated in DepEd Memorandum no. 8, Series 2015, Classroom Assessment is an integral part of curriculum implementation. It allows the teachers to track and measure learners’

progress and to adjust instruction accordingly. Classroom assessment informs the learners, as well as their parents and guardians, of their progress. Hence, the students' performance through their mastery in the learning outcome is highly affected by the assessment literacy of the teachers. According to Lian (2016), assessment literacy can be defined as the solid and sound educational assessment knowledge and skills that required by teachers in assessing students' mastery of learning outcome. Thus, it is one of the most important responsibilities of teachers in classroom teaching and learning (Mertler & Campbell, 2005; Popham, 2006; Volante & Fazio, 2007). Moreover, Mellati, M., & Khademi, M. (2018) stated that teachers' assessment literacy has a statistically significant impact on learners' writing achievements and teachers' assessment awareness leads teaching environments into effective and motivated assessment design.

Assessment literacy includes the teachers' skills in: a) choosing assessment methods that are suitable for the learning outcomes to be assessed; b) developing assessment instruments that are suitable for the learning outcomes to be assessed; c) administering, scoring, and interpreting the assessment findings of both externally-produced and teacher-produced assessment; d) using assessment results when making decisions about students' learning, teachers' teaching, school development, program, or curriculum; e) developing the reliable and valid grading procedures; communicating and reporting efficiently the assessment results to students, parents, school administrators, and other educators; and f) recognizing the illegal, unethical, inappropriate uses of assessment information and methods of assessment (Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, 2017). Moreover, Rohaya and Mohd Najib (2008) defined assessment literacy as the competency of teachers' knowledge in the assessment field which emphasizes that teachers can practice the principles, procedures, strategies, and assessment methods appropriately to assist the learning process. This will enable them to make a more accurate and fair decision about students, curriculum, and educational programs.

Similarly, Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, and Chappuis (2004), explains that in all assessment development cycle, assessment planning stage involved four steps, namely: (a) determine the intended uses of an assessment; (b) identify the learning outcomes to be assessed; (c) select the proper assessment method; and (d) determine the relative importance of each learning target. They stated that quality and valid assessments arise from clear, specific, and measurable learning outcomes.

This study is anchored on the proposed framework for assessment literacy which is grounded on the premise that assessment is a process that involves the collection and evaluation of evidence to answer a specific question (DePascale, Sharp, Ryan, Betebenner, 2017). Furthermore, DePascale (2017) states that if the purpose of assessment is to answer a clearly defined question, a critical point in the assessment process is determining whether there is sufficient evidence available to answer that question. If there is sufficient evidence, the question can be answered. If not, additional evidence must be collected and evaluated. Assessment literacy must encompass the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively and efficiently determine when sufficient evidence has been gathered.

In the context of Madrasah education, it is important to determine whether the unique characteristics of the system are integrated into the assessment practices of the teachers. These characteristics include the emphasis on the Muslim values that have to be evident in the assessment tasks of the learners and even in the types of content given to the learners.

These concepts of assessment are connected to the Philippine Professional Standards of Teachers (PPST) under the domain of Assessment and Reporting. These standards are what the teachers need to evidently show they have assessment literacy. It is important to examine the assessment experiences of the Madrasah teachers in the light of the PPST domain Assessment and Reporting to have a better perspective of how teachers are prepared in their knowledge and

skill in assessing their learners, specifically, the Muslim students under the Madrasah education. The government is strengthening its efforts for equal access to education and attention is given to the minority or special groups like the IP's and the Muslim learners. The Madrasah teachers as a unique social group have expressed in the various training and seminars conducted before this study on their struggles and difficulty in the art of teaching which includes assessing student learning. There has been a lot of assessment literacy studies (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014; Mertler, 1993) and some studies conducted in the Philippines (Magno, 2013; Hailaya, 2014; Delosa & Morales, 2015) but was not given much attention in the Southern part of Mindanao and about Madrasah teachers in particular. Thus, this study is done to learn more about the Madrasah teachers' assessment literacy and assessment experiences to contribute to policy building.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The study employed the descriptive research design which involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way which can be quantitative or qualitative. According to Creswell (2013), a descriptive survey research design are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitude, opinions, behaviors, characteristics of the population. Creswell (2008) also mentioned a qualitative research approach was deemed suitable because of its interactive nature and the opportunities of generating in-depth data. The study looks into the assessment literacy of the Madrasah teachers in the areas of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao. They were selected as the chosen study group because in these two areas, most teachers of Arabic language and Islamic Values who are proficient in the Arabic language, have the need to improve in their assessment methods as this problem came out from the various training and seminars sponsored by the US Embassy.

They were also selected because of the engagement of the researchers who are US Grant alumni committed to helping these Madrasah teachers. The sampling method used in the study was purposive sampling because selective sampling of the two areas were done considering the respondents' characteristics fit for this study. The two areas were chosen because these two areas with 67 participants, were selected based on their participation in the Madrasah project and their expression of intent to improve their assessment practices in the context of Madrasah education and the expectations of the Department of Education. These participants were able to participate in the Teachers' training for Madrasah teachers. There were no potential risks associated with this research - whether it be physical, psychological, social, legal, or economic to both the student and teacher participants in this study.

The Teachers' training Phase 1 covered topics on the teaching-learning process. However, the evaluation result showed that there is still a need to enhance the assessment part, thus this study. There were no incentives given to the participants during their participation.

The level of assessment literacy of the teachers was measured using a researcher-made questionnaire, subjected to content and expert validation. This instrument includes indicators covering the standards of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). There are five to 6 questions in every standard and the standards include: 1) Design, selection, organization and utilization of assessment strategies; 2) Monitoring and Evaluation of Learner progress and achievement; 3) Feedback to improve learning; 4) Communication of Learner needs, progress and achievement to Key Stakeholders; and 5) Use of assessment data to enhance teaching and learning practices and programs. Moreover, the teachers' experiences on classroom assessment were gathered through a focus group discussion (FGD).

The data collection was done during the whole month of January-February 2019 considering the location of the schools. At the first meeting, a focus group discussion was conducted to assess their knowledge about assessment and what are their needs regarding the assessment process. This was followed by a seminar on teaching-learning process where one day was allotted for assessment. Afterwards, a letter of consent was signed by each of the participants but with complete anonymity. Researcher-made questionnaires on knowledge, skills and attitude and the level of assessment literacy were then administered to the Madrasah teachers.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Madrasah Teachers in terms of Age and Teaching Experience

Table 1 shows that most of the respondents belong to the age group 25 years old and below and the majority of them have teaching experience of 5 years and below. Most of the teachers do not stay more than 5 years in the Madrasah schools, many of them left for employment in the public schools once they passed the licensure examination for teachers. Most of the teachers in these schools are below 30 years old so they are in their beginning teacher to novice phase of the profession. These teachers are on their first to the fifth year after graduation and they are still exploring the dynamics of real teaching in the field, trying to learn and understand the "nuances" of the teaching profession. Moreover, the challenge is even greater because the Madrasah teachers have to integrate into the DepEd subjects the appreciation of the Muslim identity and values.

Moreover, the teachers' profile presents the conditions of Madrasah schools. Although there may be a fast turnover of teachers, there is a need to improve a system in the instruction, which includes establishing the curriculum and assessment processes, to help teachers improve their instructional and assessment skills.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents' Characteristics [n=67]

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
35 and above	3	4.48
32 years old – 34 years old	2	2.99
29 years old – 31 years old	8	11.94
26 years old – 28 years old	15	22.39
23 years old – 25 years old	25	37.31
20 years old – 22 years old	14	20.90
Teaching Experience		
11 to 15 years	3	4.48
6 to 10 years	4	5.97
5 years and below	60	89.55

Level of Assessment Literacy of the Madrasah Teachers

There is a concern in the assessment literacy of teachers in this study. The overall mean of 44.89 describes a Below Literacy level of the respondents.

In the first standard under PPST Domain of Assessment and Reporting, - Design, selection, organization and utilization of assessment strategies, the indicator with the lowest percentage of correct response is Indicator # 5 - *Which is most important about portfolio and performance-based assessment?* (25.82%) followed by indicator # 6-*Was the assessment method used the most appropriate for the given objective? Why?* (31.34%). There is a challenge among the

teachers on portfolio and performance-based assessment, especially so that they need to integrate the culture and values of the Muslims in their lessons. Performance-based assessment can be a waste of time for both teachers and students if not understood and planned well. There are intricacies in planning and designing for performance-based tasks which the teacher should learn. Furthermore, the teachers lack confidence in the use of portfolios as an assessment tool, which is not so much utilized as a way to draw the desired learning outcomes.

The Madrasah teachers have difficulty identifying the assessment method that is most appropriate for the given objective and they need to be more exposed to the different assessment strategies for them to clearly differentiate the importance of each method. There is also a challenge of determining the most fit assessment tool considering the Madrasah concepts being taught and the cultural contexts being integrated.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents' Level of Assessment Literacy

Level of Assessment Literacy	Frequency	Percentage
Literate (85% and up)	0	0.00
Below Literacy (below 85%)	67	100.00
TOTAL	67	100.00

Over-all Mean = 44.89

Below Literacy

sd = 12.53

In the second standard - Monitoring and Evaluation of Learner progress and achievement, indicator #2 - *The following are acceptable purposes of a question EXCEPT?* (10.45%) has the lowest percentage of correct responses. This indicator measures one's knowledge on asking questions, and how effective the art of questioning can be in monitoring learners' progress. However, the results show that they have difficulty with the usage of the art of questioning. This is consistent with indicator #3 - *Which of the following levels of classroom questioning requires students to integrate or analyze remembered information and supply a predictable answer* (22.39%) where the respondents also have difficulty answering it.

In the third standard – Feedback to improve learning, indicator #6 - *Ms. Saplan is planning to do an “assessment of learning”.* *Which of these would she include in her plan considering her purpose for assessment?* - has the lowest percentage of correct responses which is 8.96%. This evidently shows that the Madrasah teachers need to review the three types of assessment which are assessment of learning, assessment as learning and assessment for learning. Specifically, the respondents have difficulty in answering the question on assessment of learning and its purpose. Teachers must identify first whether this task is assessing learning, assessing for learning and assessing as learning. There are specific guidelines to consider when it is for formative or for summative assessment. The challenge becomes even much greater when the teachers try to incorporate in their assessment the Madrasah characteristics.

The fourth standard - Communication of learner needs, progress and achievement to key stakeholders, highlights Indicator #1 - *Vivian is one-half standard deviation above the mean of his group in math and one standard deviation above in English. This implies?* – which has the lowest percentage of correct responses (17.91%). This is an example of communicating learners' progress and achievement using the norm-referenced wherein an individual student's percentile rank describes their performance in comparison to the performance of students in the norm group, but does not indicate whether or not they met or exceed a specific standard or criterion.

In the fifth standard - Standard 5 - Use of assessment data to enhance teaching and learning practices and programs, Indicator # 2 - *Mr. Fernandez is judging the accuracy of these: I. Test is a tool to measure a trait.; II. Measurement is the process of qualifying a given trait; III. Assessment is the gathering of quantitative and qualitative data;*

IV. Evaluation is the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data for decision making – has the lowest percentage of correct response (32.84%).

	PPST Standard 1. Design, selection, organization and utilization of assessment strategies
53.73	1. designing an appropriate test
52.24	2. determining the difficulty of an assessment task
59.70	3. selecting an appropriate tool to assess students' reasoning abilities, skills and product creation
47.76	4. utilizing Table of Specification to ensure quality test
25.82	5. utilizing portfolio and performance-based assessment
31.34	6. selecting the most appropriate assessment method to address each given learning objective
	PPST Standard 2. Monitoring and Evaluation of Learner progress and achievement
29.85	1. selecting the best method to monitor student progress and achievement
10.45	2. identifying purposes of asking questions for classroom assessment
22.39	3. identifying levels of classroom questioning that requires students to integrate or analyze remembered information and supply a predictable answer
76.12	4. identifying the process of collecting students' products and accomplishments in a given period of evaluation purposes
26.87	5. identifying the logical steps in portfolio assessment
	PPST Standard 3. Feedback to improve learning
29.85	1. organizing valid indicators of learning
29.85	2. identifying characteristics of a good marking and reporting system
76.12	3. deciding on the best time to return answered test questionnaires?
70.15	4. organizing guidelines for the presentation of performance tasks, which is the best thing to do?
62.69	5. identifying the correct steps in giving feedback
8.96	6. giving feedback vis-à-vis purpose of assessment
	PPST Standard 4. Communication of learner needs, progress and achievement to key stakeholders
17.91	1. explaining to stakeholder progress in learning of students
49.25	2. identifying the goal of parents-teachers conference/ consultation
67.16	3. interpreting the meaning of scores
46.27	4. establishing validity in tests
32.84	5. determining reliability of test scores
	PPST Standard 5. Use of assessment data to enhance teaching and learning practices and programs
52.24	1. reading meaning of normal curves of learning
32.84	2. making decisions to improve learning
71.64	3. deciding on what results to use to improve practice
59.70	4. applying principles of assessment in interpreting data

Indicators Percentage of Correct Response

The respondents were given options to identify which of the four concepts are accurate. Still, the respondent has difficulty identifying the correct answer. They may have confusions on how assessment data can be used to enhance teaching and learning practices and programs and that is through assessment and evaluation.

Table 3 shows the mean results of each PPST standard. As seen in the table, the mean of each standard ranges from 1-2.80 which are described as poor. This is consistent with the overall results which are of 'below literacy' level.

Table 3: Mean Distribution of the PPST Standards

PPST Standards	Mean	Description
1.Design, Selection, Organization and Utilization of Assessment Strategies	2.80	Poor

2. Monitoring and Evaluation of Learners' Progress and Achievement	1.66	Poor
3.Feedback to improve learning	2.78	Poor
4.Communication of Learner needs, progress and achievement to key stakeholders	2.13	Poor
5.Use of assessment data to enhance teaching and learning practices and programs	2.75	Poor

Experiences of Madrasah Teachers in Classroom Assessment

The Madrasah teachers who attended the Seminar on "Revisiting Assessment Practices among Madrasah Educators" last June 30, 2018, at Iligan City, were asked about their perception towards assessment and a focus group discussion was done before and after the training. When asked about their perception towards assessment before the training, most of them have vague thoughts about assessment. Their common responses were: "I had many questions.", "I was in a question mark", "assessment is not clear", "Madilim" (dark), "small/little knowledge", "empty". These responses show how these teachers find assessment very difficult to handle or to do.

After the training, they shared that their knowledge about assessment widened. Most of their responses were: "Now a period from a question mark", "Questions were answered", "may nalaman na", "ok na", "malinaw"/ "nalinawagan na" (things are clear), "may ilaw na" (there is light), "Loaded, Thumbs up!". They were enlightened about concepts related to assessment. Through the FGD, the teachers expressed gaining an understanding of the assessment concepts ranging from the purposes of assessment, ways to assess and how to deal with the assessment challenges they met in the context of Madrasah education.

However, the training was not enough to suffice the improvement of their assessment literacy. More exposures, training, classroom observations, and professional updating are needed for Madrasah teachers to be literate in assessment.

Furthermore, some Madrasah teachers shared their challenges as they handled assessments in their class. According to them, they have limited resources (like there was no Technology and Livelihood Education room for a TLE class) and performance tasks are given to the students were some of the challenges mentioned. When asked about what performance tasks they have given to the students, they responded that most of the performance tasks they gave were taken from textbooks. However, some of the performance tasks did not have appropriate rubrics to evaluate the students. Role plays, board work and costume presentation during UN Day were some of the performance tasks that were given to the students. Cookery, dressmaking, sports activity were the performance tasks for Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health. They explored activities even amidst the limited resources they have. When asked if they have been fair in giving grades and if there were there instances they had an argument with students/parents about grades, they admitted that they were not fair in giving grades or the basis for giving the grades was not sufficient. Take for example in Science, attendance in a Science Fair was already credited for a grade. The teachers shared that they practiced the same grading system they had in the past. They reported that they created their own rubrics even if they are not sure if they were doing the right thing. They were also required by their principal to have 10 performance tasks and 10 written works per quarter. With these, there were instances when parents or students would question the grading system.

Based on the narrative results, the Madrasah teachers faced a challenge in assessment literacy. There are common issues identified like there were few training opportunities to update teachers' knowledge on the assessment and enhance teaching skills. In like manner, the Madrasah teachers' way of assessing is still traditional assessment through paper and pencil test and attendance or participation in activities were still considered as graded.

It was evident that they had the enthusiasm when the basic concept on assessment was clarified to them through the workshop, however, the one-day training was not enough to equip them with all the knowledge, skills and attitudes to make them assessment literate. Volkwein (2004) noted, "Faculty are most enthusiastic about assessment when they fully understand what assessment is and how they and their students can benefit. When the assessment is focused on improving teaching and learning, faculty recognize it as being connected to their interests" This somehow made the Madrasah teachers realize how assessment significantly lead to effective instruction and learning. Thus, they really appreciated learning more about assessment and anticipate more learning in the future. The session ended with a realization that there is a need to revisit the ways assessments are done in the classroom.

According to Friedlander and Serban (2017), some of the challenges that most teachers have in assessment learning outcomes. One of these is their lack of knowledge about assessment processes, tools, and models. Generally, at any given college, few faculty and staff have been formally trained in developing measurable and valid learning outcomes; aligning the curriculum with those outcomes; developing assessment questions, instruments, and methods; and developing and implementing a plan for assessing those outcomes that is manageable, meaningful, and sustainable.

Moreover, proper assessment methods is a relevant opportunity for Muslim learners to achieve their learning outcomes, which also include recognizing their cultural contexts, values and practices through integrating into the content and competencies, the topics which are relevant and of interest to Muslim learners.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Madrasah teachers faced the challenge of improving their knowledge, skills and attitude towards assessment. Although the training is given to them somehow helped them understand and appreciate assessment, they need to further enhance and practice effective assessment strategies. The Madrasah teachers, even more, need training on assessment strategies and methods because they don't have the formal training on teaching and learning strategies as shared during the FGD. The important area to be examined is the dilemma of integrating correct assessment at the same time teaching the Madrasah concepts and contexts. There is a need for the integration of the teachings of the Qur'an (the holy book), Hadith (sayings of the prophet Mohammed), and Fiqh (jurisprudence) in their assessment tasks since these are the focus of the curriculum and this is what makes Madrasah schools unique and relevant to the needs of the Muslim learners.

According to the assessment literacy framework where assessment is a process that involves the collection and evaluation of evidence to answer a specific question, the results affirm that the Madrasah teachers who have difficulty answering the questionnaire on assessment, lack assessment literacy. It is consistent with their responses during the FGD that they are amenable that they lack the knowledge about assessment and even their assessment practices are far from what should be done. They further admitted that they need more training and interventions regarding assessment.

Schools need to develop a comprehensive plan to provide faculty and staff with the competencies they need to conduct an assessment and provide training materials on assessment processes, tools, and models that can be used by faculty and staff. Assessment literacy is important and strong support like training materials and learning from best

practices are ways to enhance this skill. Specifically, the Madrasah schools should look into establishing a plan to develop the assessment literacy of the Madrasah teachers where they can contextualize their strategies and apply their assessment knowledge and skills to appropriate methods. Madrasah education is aimed to integrate into classroom content the cultural values of Muslim learners and it is important to also determine whether these competencies are taught and learned well thus assessment of learning is crucial in this process. Indeed, it is a challenge for Madrasah teachers because aside from designing assessments for the DepEd subjects mandated of them, they have to integrate the teachings of the Holy Book into the mainstream subjects. The skill that the teachers have to focus on is on monitoring the progress of the students even after the assessment tasks are given to them.

Furthermore, support can be done through filling the knowledge gaps after their undergraduate studies and more relevant training and formation of the identity as student learning assessors.

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